**NAVAL INSPECTOR GENERAL COMMAND CLIMATE ASSESSMENT OF
DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY (Policy)
8 AND 9 JULY 2014**
~~DRAFT REPORT~~

Bottom Lines

- We observed evidence of a disaffected staff frustrated by perceived leadership challenges, confusing organizational structure, and suboptimal communication.

- Considerable risk exists to staff commitment and retention of the workforce.

- We received several comments concerning deficiencies with the implementation of the personnel management program to include inaccurate position descriptions, missing or incomplete performance plans, and missing progress reviews. In addition, we received indication of a potential violation of time and attendance policy.

- Although the data is insufficient to quantify the magnitude of inappropriate personnel behavior, there were indications that at least one supervisor is prone to making offensive comments in the workplace about certain protected groups.

Contents

Background

Deputy Under Secretary of the Navy (Policy) (DUSN(P)) advises the Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV)and the Undersecretary of the Navy (UNSECNAV) on foreign and defense, policy, intelligence, security and capabilities and readiness issues.

- Coordinates defense and foreign policy issues with USD(P) and, at the direction of the SECNAV, formulates department-wide strategic plans, program objectives, policies and standards in support of policy objectives;

- Prepares the SECNAV's policy planning guidance for Department of the Navy (DON) Program Objective Memorandum development;

- Serves as the DON Security Executive, working with Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence (USD(I));

- Supports the SECNAV and UNSECNAV in the execution of their statutory intelligence responsibilities;

- Advises the SECNAV and UNSECNAV on key capabilities and readiness issues;

- Acts as directed for the SECNAV and UNSECNAV with senior officials and agencies of the U.S. Government, as well as conduct international outreach to foreign maritime allies and partners;

- Supports the SECNAV's Advisory Panel (SNAP)

At the request of (b)(6)   , (b)(6)   referred to in the report as the (b)(6)   , the Naval Inspector General's Office conducted a command climate assessment of DUSN(P).

Method

In support of the (b)(6)   request to assess organization command climate, the Office of the Naval Inspector General (NAVINSGEN) conducted a series of interviews with DUSN(P) staff to discern workforce perceptions of command climate. The NAVINSGEN chose the interview method because of the small DUSN(P) population and its ability not only to capture perceptions, but also to probe participant input in a private environment.

On 8 and 9 July 2014, NAVINSGEN conducted a total of 24 interviews of DUSN(P) employees, to include members of the SES and enlisted sailors. There were a total of 15 males and nine female participants of various civilian grades and military ranks. Of the 24 interviews

conducted, nineteen interviews were scheduled by random invitation[1] with a caveat that at least two members from each directorate (Intelligence, International Affairs, Naval Capabilities and Readiness, Policy, SECNAV Advisory Panel) and the front office were represented. The remaining five interviews were either requested by DUSN(P) staff members or by NAVINSGEN. All interviews were conducted in person, in a private room except, at the request of three participants, interviews were conducted via teleconference.

Each interview was scheduled for 30 minutes. The interviewer followed a protocol script: (a) NAVINSGEN personnel introductions, (b) brief introduction to the NAVINSGEN mission, (c) privacy, Whistleblower Protection statutes, and description of how the interview would be conducted, (d) participant-generated command climate discussion topics perceived to impact the mission, job performance, or quality of life, and (f) subsequent refinement and discussion of participant-derived topics with an emphasis on understanding the perceived impact as defined in Table 1. In some cases where noted, NAVINSGEN staff prompted questions on previous, participant-generated topics. Note takers transcribed interview proceedings, which were subsequently entered and categorized in a spreadsheet database to determine the total number of interviews in which a command topic theme and its perceived impact were discussed.

Table 1. Definitions for Perceived Impacts on the Mission, Job Performance, and/or Quality of Life

Major	Moderate	Minor
▪ Unable to accomplish a mission or task ▪ Accepted substantial risk to accomplish an assigned mission or task ▪ Deferred key mission readiness tasks ▪ Clearly violates law or regulation (e.g., Title 10, U.S.C, 32 CFR) or Navy policy	▪ Adversely impacts the mission, job performance, or quality of life, but does not meet any of the Major impact requirements	▪ General distractor that does not meet the Moderate impact criterion
▪ Outstanding command climate or quality of work life	▪ Positively impacts mission, job performance, or quality of life, but does not meet any of the Major impact requirements	▪ General positive effect that does not meet the Moderate impact criterion

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[1] A randomly selected sample size (n) was determined so as to not exceed a 5% chance of "missing" a command climate topic with a 15-20% perceived occurrence in the population. The probability of missing a topic is calculated using: $p = (1 - o)^n$, where p is the probability of missing a topic given its perceived occurrence (o) in the population. The probability of missing a command climate topic in 19 interviews given a 20% perceived occurrence in the population is .0144; 15% occurrence is .0456.

Data Analysis

Based on the perceptions of DUSN(P) personnel interviewed, NAVENSGEN identified the following key challenges facing the leadership at DUSN(P).

Fear in the Workplace

An environment of fear exists in the workplace at DUSN(P). Personnel are afraid of identifying their concerns at DUSN(P) through the chain-of-command for fear of reprisal or retaliation by the ^{(b)(6)}, the ^{(b)(6)}, and other supervisors. A number of personnel specifically identified the ^{(b)(6)} as verbally abusive in the workplace, inclined to reprimand in public, and denigrating and difficult to work with. Staffing work products through the ^{(b)(6)} is perceived by a number of personnel as onerous and debasing. Their work is judged to be inadequate but they feel are not given adequate guidance on how to improve. Some interviewees expressed that stress from their the work environment at DUSN(P) manifested itself in physical ailments.

Discrimination

There are indications that there is some degree of discrimination at DUSN(P). Two instances were reported where personnel felt that their supervisor made a derogatory statement about minorities.   We could not specifically validate the scope of discrimination at DUSN(P), but there are personnel on the staff that feel that it exists there.

Organizational Commitment

While DUSN(P) personnel are very committed to their work and recognize the importance of the organization's mission, we found low organizational commitment across the staff. Perceived factors effecting organizational commitment include shortfalls in DUSN(P) leadership, lack of upward mobility and recognition, and confusing organizational structure. A number of personnel feel undervalued. Several participants expressed that if they had had an opportunity to leave DUSN(P) in the past few months, they would have already left. DUSN(P) is at risk of losing talented and experienced personnel due to a poor command climate.

Leadership

There is a general lack of trust in DUSN(P) leadership and a general sense that command climate was better under the previous ^{(b)(6)}. This lack of trust is primarily centered on the ^{(b)(6)} and the ^{(b)(6)}, who was noted above as verbally abusive. Many staff members feel that the ^{(b)(6)} does not empower personnel or leverage their expertise in the decision-making process. The staff feels that there is no overall vision for DUSN(P). The staff would also like the ^{(b)(6)} to be more accessible. Limited access to the ^{(b)(6)} is viewed as a hindrance to productivity and product quality.

Of note, the ^{(b)(6)} was singled out on two occasions as having a supportive impact on communication and personnel relations.

Communication

There is room for improvement in communications up and down the chain of command. The staff feels that expectations are not being communicated and, therefore, it is impossible to meet the (b)(6) expectations. There is a perceived lack of transparency under the current (b)(6) ; information is shared with only a select few personnel, putting others at a disadvantage. DUSN(P) is viewed by many staff members as a stove-piped organization with room for improvement in cross-directorate communications. Initiatives such as brown bag lunches and potential use of an internal portal are viewed as positive steps to improved communication. However, the general view of the staff toward communication remains negative and a perceived "promise" by the (b)(6) to improve communication has not happened.

Organizational Structure

The current organizational structure and the flow of taskings at DUSN(P) is frustrating the staff. Roles and responsibilities are perceived as ambiguous within the organization, and the front office is not being effectively used to coordinate work flow within DUSN(P). The (b)(6) , on occasion, bypasses the chain of command by coordinating directly with Action Officers. This results in circuitous and inefficient review when supervisors must reengage the (b)(6) to propose revisions to work product to their Action Officers. This practice causes consternation within the chain of command. Some expressed concern that a number of senior leaders inside DUSN(P) were marginalized by the (b)(6) , resulting in inefficiencies, increasing work load for others, and lengthening the amount of time required to complete tasks. Personnel are frustrated that the (b)(6) is dual hatted as (b)(6) and (b)(6) making her less accessible.

Personnel Management

Personnel management practices at DUSN(P) must be reviewed to ensure that they are being maintained in accordance with governing instructions and policy. Several personnel reported that not all aspects of civilian performance management were being properly conducted. While we did not conduct a records review to verify these statements, personnel reported that there are inaccuracies in Notification of Personnel Action forms (SF 50), outdated Position Descriptions, performance plans are not conducted, progress reviews are not being performed, some personnel may be working uncompensated overtime . Time and attendance records require review to ensure that personnel have not been given more than 59 minutes off prior to holiday weekends. People are frustrated by the perception that DUSN(P) leadership will not fill job openings with personnel from within the organization.

Appendix A: Full Listing of Interview Topics

The following topics were identified by 19 DUSN(P) staff interviews as affecting command climate. Table A-1 lists command climate topics in descending order, where the perceived highest impact and most frequently cited topics appear toward the upper portion of the table. Topics that were less frequently cited that were expressed as a major impact are also elevated in the sort. For example, DUSN(P) staff mentioned Leadership and Organizational Commitment most often as having major or moderate impacts on the mission, job performance, and quality of life. Organizational Commitment is elevated since more interviewees expressed this topic as a major impact on command climate. The topics listed in Table A-1 are not mutually exclusive.

Table A-1. Command Climate Topics Discussed During Interviews

Topic	Impact		
	Major	Moderate	Minor
Organizational Commitment	●●●●●●●●	●●	
Leadership	●●●	●●●●●●●	●●
Organizational Structure	●●	●●●●●	
Communication		●●●●●●	●●●
Advancement/Hiring		●●●●	●●
Performance Management	●●●		
Fear of Reprisal	●●	●	
Awards/Recognition		●●●	
Telework/Telecommuting	●		●●
Discrimination	●		
Time and Attendance	●		
Teamwork	●	●	
Work Hours/Schedule		●●	●
Training		●	
Military-Civilian Relationship		●	

<u>Notes</u>. Descending order of perceived impact on the mission, job performance, or quality of life from unprompted interviews (indicated by number of blue circles) in which the topic was discussed.

Organizational Commitment

Many participants noted that either they or co-workers are actively seeking new employment. Perceived shortfalls in leadership, lack of upward mobility and recognition, confusing organizational structure, and the inability to telework (many of the topics listed in Table A-1) were noted as factors that negatively impact organizational commitment. Several participants expressed that if they had the chance in the past few months that they would have already left DUSN(P).

Leadership

Dialog concerning leadership primarily centered on the (b)(6)   and the (b)(6)   . Several participants expressed strongly that the (b)(6) was abusive in the workplace, often reprimanding staff in public rather than in private, unprepared for review of products, and was perceived to be an obstruction to job performance and mission accomplishment. Participants acknowledged (b)(6) subject-matter expertise; however, they also expressed that her behavior substantially reduces morale, elevates workplace stress, and threatens retention. Participants also expressed that the $20K (reported) to send (b)(6) to Harvard University to supposedly help mitigate the situation was ultimately a waste of training funds. A few participants also expressed that such training should be reserved for top performers. Participants expressed that sending (b)(6) to this class was perceived as a reward rather than as punishment for substandard behavior.

Of the several interview participants who commented on DUSN(P) leadership, many expressed that (b)(6)   leadership style does not adequately empower staff nor leverage their expertise in the decision-making process. Participants also opined that the front office does not clearly articulate a vision (see also, Organizational Structure and Communication). Most participants acknowledged the (b)(6)   busy schedule and time required to accommodate all of the DUSN(P) domains; however, they also expressed that the (b)(6)   was far less accessible than her (b)(6)   . All of these leadership comments were expressed to impact staff morale, productivity and workflow, and product quality. Some participants expressed that command climate was better under the previous leadership. The (b)(6)   was singled out on two occasions as having a supportive impact on communication and personnel relations.

Organizational Structure

Participants explicitly mentioned organization structure as having major or moderate impacts on mission accomplishment and job performance. They expressed concerns regarding the dual-hatted role of the (b)(6)   , who was reported as concurrently serving in her previous role as the (b)(6)   . Participants expressed that serving in both roles negatively impacts overall mission performance. Participants also expressed that the reporting and review process is unclear. Workflow is perceived to swim in many directions as it approaches the front office, making it unpredictable to the workforce. According to participants, the organizational structure, or the perceived lack thereof, sets the workforce in a reactive posture that clouds roles and responsibilities, and is perceived to produce duplicative efforts and negative impact on workforce productivity. Workflow often stalls while waiting for (b)(6)   guidance and

ultimately requires significant rework because, according to participants, the (b)(6) does not effectively communicate expectations. This also impedes Action Officer learning.

Communication

Participants perceived moderate to minor impacts on the mission and job performance as a result of deficits in communication. Several participants noted a lack of transparency since the (b)(6) departure—that information is not as freely shared to benefit the entire organization, but rather only a selected few. While adequate communication within directorates was reported, several participants expressed a sense of disconnection from the (b)(6) and expressed that there is little if no lateral sharing of information across directorates. Although work is eventually accomplished, products are delayed, in some cases purportedly due to barriers in sharing information among directorates. (Participants realized that directorates are highly specialized and are often focused on different aspects of the mission, but participants also thought that enough overlap exists that could be leveraged to improve the quality and timeliness of product delivery.)

On a positive note, brown bag meetings were perceived as a good vehicle for communication; however, it was not seen as a comprehensive mend for all communication challenges within the organization. For example, participants reported that resources such as an internal portal or other information tools are not utilized to improve management of information.

Some participants reported a "promise" from the (b)(6) that communication of information would change; however, participants noted no major improvements in communication under the current administration. Some participants reported that communication is worse than it was under the (b)(6) . There was a strong expression that the current (b)(6) applies a close-hold posture for all information.

Advancement/Hiring

Participants expressed moderate to minor negative impacts on morale as a result of recent DUSN(P) job openings. Participant expressions are best summarized in this quote: "Why are we training new people from the outside? We don't even apply anymore… The only reason I stay is because I have a good supervisor." Some of the participants expressed confusion as to why they were not moved from excepted to competitive service and how recent hiring decisions were made (see also, Communication, Awards and Recognition).

Performance Management

Inaccuracies in Notification of Personnel Action forms (SF-50) and outdated or generic Position Descriptions were reported by several participants. Participants also stated that performance plans were not established and progress reviews were not performed. Three participants reported that these deficiencies have a major impact on command climate. When NAVINSGEN prompted participants who had not raised this topic to discuss this topic, all agreed with previously unprompted input. These expressed shortfalls are anticipated to have a major impact on closing performance reviews in the current fiscal year and more generally, the evaluation of staff performance for corrective actions or recommendations for

promotion/advancement. The previously expressed shortfalls in performance management elicited feelings of reduced value.

Fear of Reprisal

Some participants claimed fear of reprisal and directly noted that the non-attribution stance by NAVINGEN was a critical part of the interview process: few would be willing to make their comments if they thought the leadership could attribute their comments to them . Participants feared reprisal from the (b)(6)   , (b)(6)   , and/or supervisors. The fear of reprisal was expressed to have a major or moderate negative impact on the mission, job performance, and/or quality of life. Participants stated that they avoid engagements with the aforementioned leaders when possible, or at the very least, limit their engagements.

Awards and Recognition

Participants expressed that DUSN(P) employees are undervalued and not recognized for their efforts. Such opinions were also echoed when NAVINSGEN prompted other participants to comment on the topic. Two primary themes emerged under this command climate topic. First, employees were interested in being recognized for work that was valued within DUSN(P) or at other SECNAV levels (personnel had no sense if SECNAV valued the quality of DUSN(P) work). Participants commented that they had been tasked to train new hires to fill positions for which they felt they were qualified to fill but were either not selected to fill or not given an opportunity to fill (we were unable to determine the exact reason). Others noted that they had taken on the workload of senior personnel who were out of the office due to illness. In both instances, DUSN(P) personnel were frustrated that they had not been recognized for their efforts in this regard.

Telework/Telecommuting—Work Hours/Schedule

Three participants voiced different impacts on the no telework policy or the inability to work a compressed schedule. Expressed impacts were generally related to their commute to work. Participants stated that, because they are not required to meet on a regular basis with leadership in the front office or with their senior or directorate leadership, they did not understand the rationale for the no telework policy at DUSN(P). Participants generally expressed that they could effectively complete work tasks from home. One participant expressed that their commute was unsustainable and the participant will take a job offer that provides a better work-home life balance. Participants felt that implementation of a telework would improve morale and quality of life. Participants viewed the "no telework" policy as an manifestation of DUSN(P) leadership's lack of trust in the workforce.

Two participants claimed that lower-graded civilian employees were working overtime without compensation, and one was disappointed that overtime/compensation was not offered to the employees.

Discrimination

Two instances were reported where personnel felt that their supervisor made a derogatory statement about minorities and protected groups. In both instances the staff member was unwilling to make a formal complaint and was perplexed as to why an individual would say such

things. The participant did not think that the mission or job performance was affected, but expressed that it was inappropriate to say such things in the workplace.

Time and Attendance

One participant stated that civilians were given four hours off just before the 4th of July holiday weekend via email correspondence.

Teamwork

Two participants expressed that teamwork at the worker and immediate supervisor levels had a major positive impact on DUSN(P) command climate. This sentiment was often repeated when NAVINSGEN staff prompted other participants to comment on this topic. Participants expressed pleasure with their working relationships below the senior and directorate leadership levels.

Training

One participant expressed that a focused look at training opportunities may benefit the organization. With senior civilian leaders soon to retire, this participant opined that a well-constructed training plan would prepare staff for future roles and responsibilities as senior personnel transitioned out of DUSN(P). The participant offered leadership, critical thinking, and technical writing as training examples where DUSN(P) may get the best return on investment.

Military-Civilian Relationship

One civilian employee thought that DUSN(P) leadership does not fully understand/appreciate the military culture or what expertise and capabilities the military staff bring to the DUSN(P). There was a sense that the leadership didn't understand how the military can be leveraged to positively impact coordination between other organizations and the quality of DUSN(P) products. This participant felt that the military staff members are undervalued and underutilized.